

# San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update – August 2011

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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## BACKGROUND:

The site consists of impoundments located adjacent to the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) Bridge and the San Jacinto River and the surrounding areas, containing paper mill waste from the Pasadena Champion Paper Mill. Two impoundments are located north of the I-10 Bridge and are partially submerged in the San Jacinto River on the western side in Harris County, Texas. An additional impoundment is suspected to be located directly south of the I-10 Bridge and is currently being investigated under the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Dioxin concentrations as high as 360,000 parts per trillion have been found in sediment samples collected from the submerged portion of the waste disposal ponds, as well as dioxin concentrations as high as 3,660 parts per trillion in sediment samples collected outside the original 1966 waste ponds. A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed.

The site was listed on the EPA National Priorities List on March 19, 2008. The EPA SJRWP website can be found online at: [http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san\\_jacinto](http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto).

## **STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:**

### **I. Community Outreach**

EPA and its partner federal, state, and local agencies have announced the next community engagement meeting for residents on Thursday, September 22, 2011, at the Highlands, Texas community center. The meeting will focus on the completion of the recent Removal Action to stabilize the dioxin site; further site investigations, and related water issues. EPA staff will also participate in the September Community Awareness Committee with Harris Co. officials.

### **II. Source Stabilization**

On September 2, respondents submitted a draft final report on construction activities for the time critical removal action at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits site for review and approval by the EPA. The draft document is currently under review by the EPA and is anticipated to be completed by September 30, 2011.

### **III. Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)**

The Respondents are currently implementing the field sampling plans for the Fate & Transport Model Study, including the collection of upstream sediment load and current velocity data. Data for the low river flow condition has been collected. However, data collection for the high river flow conditions is waiting on a high river flow event. Soil samples from residential properties were recently collected from both the east and west sides of the San Jacinto River near the site within the floodplain. The samples were analyzed for dioxins. Finally, the EPA, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and other agencies met with the respondents regarding additional sampling in the southern impoundment, and the final sampling program is now being developed.

### **IV. Watershed Management**

EPA continues to coordinate with the Port of Houston Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and the TCEQ. The port and EPA will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement to facilitate the exchange of data to further investigate the SJRWP site and Patrick Bayou and will inform communities in the area. EPA met with the Corps in June and requested data for dredged material deposited on properties near the local communities. TCEQ envisions completing the total maximum daily load for Buffalo Bayou with regard to dioxin/furan by the end of 2012 and will put together a monitoring and implementation plan to reduce levels in Buffalo Bayou to within national background levels.

### **V. Enforcement**

The potentially responsible party (PRP) group continues to conduct the RI/FS under the Unilateral Administrative Order. With regards to the time-critical removal action, respondents have finished the capping work and have submitted the final report as required by the Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). Respondents continue to work towards resolving the outstanding issue of stipulated penalties resulting from prior noncompliance with the AOC.